

ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

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UNITED STATES

Ordass Elected First LWF Vice-President

(Minneapolis) - At its first session after the Assembly in Minneapolis (see EPS No.32) the new Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation elected Bishop Lajos Ordass of Hungary as first LWF vice-president. Bishop Ordass had been a vice-president at the time of his wrongful imprisonment by the Hungarian government in 194 . In electing him at its Minneapolis meeting, the LWF Executive expressed the hope that he would be able to carry out his functions without difficulty. Bishop Bo Giertz of Sweden was elected second vice-president, and Bishop Rajah B. Manikam of India third vice-president.

Dr. R. Weeber of Stuttgart was asked to continue as Treasurer of the LWF, and Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist (Geneva) as executive secretary.

The Executive Committee entrusted plans for the projected LWF Research Institute on Roman Catholicism to a consultative committee presided over by Dr. Vilmos Vatja (Geneva), director of the LWF's Department of Theology. The committee also includes Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger of Bavaria, Dr. Peter Brunner (Professor of Theology at Heidelberg) and Professor Kristen Ejner Skydsgaard, the Danish theologian.

The Executive Committee advocated renewed contact with the USA's Missouri Synod, the largest Lutheran Church in America, which has not yet joined the LWF for theological reasons. Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the LWF and Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, executive secretary, will personally bear a letter to the Missouri Synod, asking it to reexamine the possibility of joining the LWF. Fifteen official visitors from the Missouri Synod attended the recent LWF Assembly in Minneapolis.

Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, the new president of the LWF, will continue the efforts of his predecessor, Bishop Hanns Lilje, to promote contacts with churches in Eastern Europe.

E.P.S., Geneva

FINLANDAnother "Ecumenical Summer"

Finland, as well as the United States, has had an ecumenical summer, with more ecumenical meetings and contacts than ever before.

In cooperation with the Laymen's Institute of the Lutheran Church, the Finnish Ecumenical Council organised two ecumenical conferences at Järvenpää and, in cooperation with the Finnish Student Christian Movement and the Orthodox Students' Association, held an ecumenical work camp in August at Viinijärvi.

An "ecumenical visit" to Finland during the summer was made by Dr. Hildegard Schaefer, who is in charge of relations with the Eastern Church Department of the German Evangelical Church and other German church leaders. "One of the greatest dangers for the Lutheran and Orthodox Christians of Finland is isolation. Internationalism in the church and closer contact with ecumenical work are very important for us," she was told by Dr. A. Siirala, director of the Lutheran Institute at Järvenpää.

Later, the German churchmen were told by the dean of the seminary for Orthodox priests that it was hoped they would eventually provide opportunities for some of the Orthodox priests who had graduated from the seminary in Finland to take a full four-year theological course in Germany.

The University Library at Helsinki is interested in an exchange of publications with member churches of the World Council of Churches, the German delegation was told.

Seppo A. Teinonen, general secretary of the Finnish Ecumenical Council, reports that one of the outstanding features of all these ecumenical contacts was the chance for meetings between Protestants and Orthodox. The Ecumenical Council, Mr. Teinonen says, sees as one of its main tasks the promotion of ecumenical conversations between Protestants and Orthodox. Finland, he added, is a particularly suitable place for this because it is the only country which has two state churches - one Lutheran and the other Orthodox.

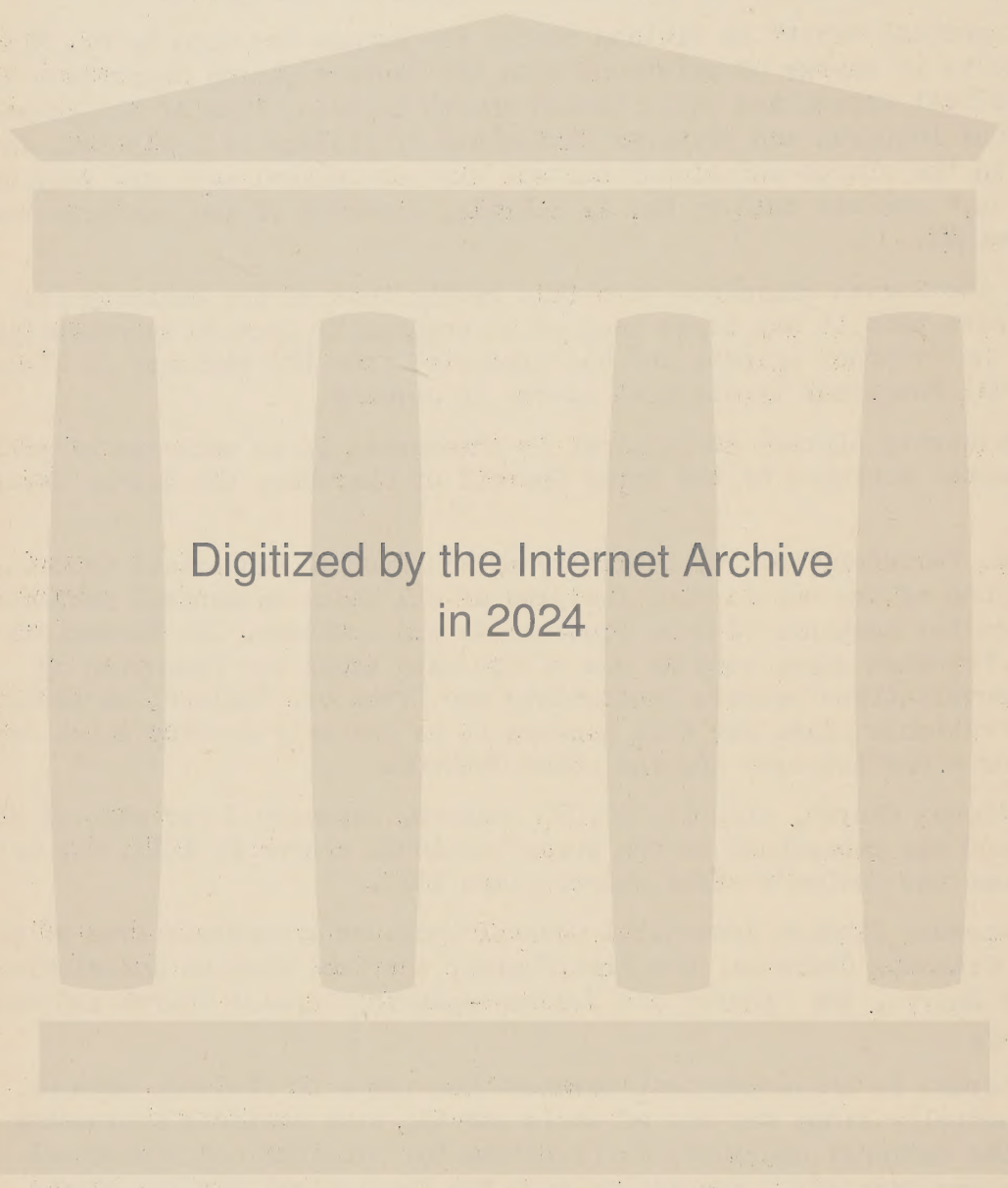
The Orthodox Church, with its 80,000 members, makes up 2 per cent of the population, and was recognised as the second national church in 1917. The Lutheran Church has been the nation's state church since 1527.

The 40-member Finnish Ecumenical Council includes representatives of the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches, the Free Church, the Free Mission Association, the Methodist Church, the Finnish and Swedish-speaking Baptist Church and the Salvation Army.

The interest in the ecumenical movement has grown in Finland, says Dr. Teinonen, especially since the end of World War II, with contacts increasing between the two national churches. An Institute for Missions and Ecumenical Research has been founded in connection with the Theological Faculty of the University of Helsinki. The Study Committee of the Ecumenical Council has just published reports giving Finnish views on two study projects of the World Council of Churches, "Our Common Christian Responsibility Toward Areas of Rapid Social Change" and "The Ministry of the Laity".

This year the Finnish churches established an Inter-Church Aid Commission to cooperate with the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees (see EPS No. 11).

E.P.S., Geneva



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U.S.S.R.Living Churches in Siberia

The Lutheran pastor and parish of the town of Akmolinsk in Siberia have been officially recognised by the state.

The pastor, Eugen Bachmann, told church officials at Leipzig that his church had held a thanksgiving service and at the same time admitted young people to confirmation. The church building was paid for by the congregation.

Many Lutherans of German origin have written from exile in distant provinces of Northern Russia, Siberia and Central Asia, thanking friends for sending Bibles and asking for more religious books. Letters confirm that thousands of families - formerly living on the Volga, the Black Sea, in the Caucasus and elsewhere maintained their faith under pressure after being deported from their homes.

The Russian amnesty of September 1955 restored their rights as citizens and their religious liberty. Since then the Church has been able to expand more freely. Larger congregations have been formed and more churches built. Services and Bible-study classes are usually conducted by lay preachers. The Lutheran World Federation has tried, through the Russian Embassy in Bern, to obtain permission for a delegation of European churchmen to visit the eastern districts of Russia, but so far without success (see EPS No. 26). E.P.S., Geneva

RUMANIAOrthodox Want Contacts with Western Christians

(Paris) - Olivier Clément, a Rumanian monk who is staying in Paris as the friend of Patriarch Justinian of Rumania, has told the French weekly paper "Réforme" that the Rumanian Church wants to establish closer contacts with Christians in the West.

Today Orthodox Christians in Rumania are suffering from their solitude, he said, and they are interested in knowing about the West, but the West ignores them. They want to have more contacts, to let the West know the results of their enquiries, to enter into a living dialogue with the Christians of the West. "A dialogue of this kind would go to the very depth of ecumenism. It is an opportunity which must not be missed", he said.

The Rumanian monk also stated that religious instruction in Rumanian state schools is again being given by Orthodox priests. He spoke of a new kind of monasticism and of the deepening of spiritual life in Rumania. A number of professors are studying philosophical problems, including Western philosophy and ecumenical questions, in addition to theology, he added. The Rumanian Patriarchate has jurisdiction over 14 million Orthodox Christians, ten seminaries and two theological institutes. There is no restriction on the publication of books and papers. There are about 7,000 monks and nuns living in Rumania in about 200 monasteries and convents. The state contributes considerable amounts in support of the Church. E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANYDr. von Thadden Reports on Summer Meetings

(Fulda) - Dr. Reinold von Thadden, president of the German Evangelical Kirchentag, just back from the large ecumenical meetings in the United States this summer, reports that the rôle of the laity in the church was the direct or indirect concern both of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and of the Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation.

"New forms for the Church and increased possibilities of action for laymen and women within the missionary task of the Church", said Dr. von Thadden, "were

central issues in the discussions." He added that he had noticed that the idea of the Kirchentag has found an unexpected response in the whole world, though it is impossible directly to imitate the German Kirchentag.

Church leaders now recognise that they can no longer hold conferences without bringing the local congregations in the cities where they meet into the picture through ecumenical meetings and services.

It was emphasised in official sessions as well as in private conversations that the Church of the present must develop new forms of proclaiming the Gospel, adapted to the claims of a transformed world of the twentieth century. "The Christian responsibility in a modern society is so manifold that it can no longer be assumed by one single office, but must be accepted by the whole living community," Dr. von Thadden continued. "That is where the direct witness of the layman in his secular occupation must play a decisive rôle, and the congregation itself must become the place where the Christian fellowship proves itself and where all the conflicts of a world that has become godless are overcome." E.P.S., Geneva

INDIA

Christians Protest against Communist Bill

(Madras) - Christians in South India are protesting against the Education Bill sponsored by the Communist government of the state of Kerala which would put all schools in the state under government control.

Protest rallies were launched after 26 archbishops and bishops of various Christian communions issued a joint statement condemning the measure. Signing the statement were leaders of the Roman Catholic, Mar Thoma and Jacobite Churches, the Church of South India and the Church Mission Society.

The prelates charged that the bill is "clearly aimed at the liquidation of private agencies" and seeks to "regiment the educational system on a Communist pattern".

"The provisions of the bill are calculated to enable the government to eliminate, through a concerted process of fettering and intimidation, the private agencies whose great service in the field of education has been extolled by successive governments and eminent educators in the state and outside," the joint statement said. "The protagonists of the bill... are attempting to reduce education to a state monopoly and to the status of a political instrument of the party in power."

The Kerala Communist government took office after a general election last February.

An estimated 25 to 30 per cent of the state's population is Christian. According to a report for 1954-55, some 3,170 of the state's 5,904 schools were privately operated, most of them by Protestants and Catholics. E.P.S., Geneva

GHANA

Churchmen Express "Apprehension"

The Christian Council of Ghana has appealed to Prime Minister Nkrumah to withdraw the special Deportation Bill under which two Moslem leaders were deported from Ghana during August. The church leaders said the bill violated the principle of justice "whereby every citizen possesses the right to defend himself against any charge preferred against him".

Visiting England, the Bishop of Accra, the Right Rev. Richard Roseveare, one of the signers of the appeal, said there was "very real apprehension" in Ghana

concerning official actions since independence among many of the educated and thoughtful citizens of Ghana.
E.P.S., Geneva

ITALYAmbassador Assures Churchmen of Religious Freedom

The Italian ambassador to the United States, Mr. Manilo Brosio, has assured the National Association of Evangelicals that the clause in the Italian constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion and assembly will be enforced. Some Evangelical congregations had protested to the Italian government that a court decision of last March upholding the guarantee had not been implemented. Mr. Brosio said he had been instructed by his government to inform the NAE that the ruling of Italy's new Constitutional Court, clarifying Article 19 of the Italian constitution, will be considered basic to the protection of freedom of worship in Italy.

Article 19 guarantees "the right freely to profess one's religious faith, to propagate it and to exercise the worship thereof in private and in public, with the restriction only that rituals contrary to morals are not involved".

The ruling upheld the right of Protestants to hold services in places "open to the public" but non-Roman Catholics in Italy who hold religious services in a "public place" still have to give three days notice to the police. A "public place" is said to be a street or square, while a place "open to the public" means a building (see EPS Nos. 10, 12, 14).
E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATESVisser 't Hooft Urges Ministry to Speak Out

(Oberlin, Ohio) - Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, told a group of 500 Protestant theology students that their main job as ministers will be to make themselves available as transmitters of the voice of Christ. He was speaking at the fourth triennial national conference of the Interseminary Movement at Oberlin College. Established 60 years ago, the movement includes theological students of more than 100 seminaries.

Dr. Visser 't Hooft said a new "search for authority" is going on in the world today and Christ's voice is "mixed up with a lot of other voices". Declaring that the "whole point of the ministry is to participate in the ministry of Christ", Dr. Visser 't Hooft called ministers both "slaves and spokesmen", and emphasised that "insofar as we are slaves and spokesmen, the minister has the same authority as Christ".

"This new search for authority itself is a recognition that there can be no Christianity unless there is a basic acceptance of the authority of Christ", he said. The authority is "total and unlimited, does not admit others beside it, and you can't be neutral when you've met it. Thus the minister, as a slave in the prophetic, priestly and royal aspects of his ministry, has to address himself to his social and political environment in the name of Christ," he declared.
E.P.S., Geneva

SOUTH AFRICAMethodist Group Denounces Bill

The Northern Transvaal Synod of the South African Methodist Church has declared it is bound in conscience to reject provisions of the recently-enacted Native Laws Amendment Act which forbids Negroes to attend services at churches in white communities without the express sanction of the Minister of Native

Affairs (see EPS Nos. 10, 11, 13, 14/15, 18 and 20). The action was taken at a recent synod meeting where the Rev. D. Dugmore declared: "We are opposing this law because Caesar threatens to interfere with our duty to render unto God the things that are God's."

In other action involving the nation's apartheid policy, the newly-named Anglican Archbishop of Capetown, the Most Rev. Joost de Blank, said that it makes the country "the odd man of the twentieth century" because it goes against the world trend towards liberalising race relations.

In New York on the last leg of a flying tour of Anglican centres over the world that have racially-mixed populations, the archbishop said that he could not yet discuss the apartheid policy in detail but stressed that "the fundamental principle of man's equality before God applies everywhere and policies aimed against this principle cannot be the right ones".

Whenever racial disturbances have existed governments and people "have moved in a liberalising direction, even though some may think the moves are too slow and some think they are too fast". But South Africa is the odd man, he said, because it is the only country in the world where the development of race relations "goes the other way round".
E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATES

Moravian Church Holding General Synod

(Bethlehem, Pa.) - Forty-four official representatives of the Moravian Church are meeting in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for the first world-wide general synod of their denomination since 1931. The meeting, which opened on August 12 and closes on September 8, is a highlight of the denomination's 500th anniversary which is being observed throughout the world (see EPS Nos. 3, 8, 12 and 24).

At the opening worship service, Dr. F.P. Stocker of Bethlehem, chairman of the General Directory of the World-Wide Moravian Church, said that since the last general synod the Moravian Church had undergone "years of painful separation". The church, he said, has gone through "fire and flood and the heartrending experience of brother fighting brother. Together we come to show the world that the Moravian unity is a living reality and that we are all one in Jesus."

Delegates came from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, the United States and mission fields in Africa, Alaska, Nicaragua and the British West Indies. All former sessions of the synod have been held in Herrnhut, Germany, considered the headquarters of the Moravian Church in Europe. Normally the general synod is convened every ten years.
E.P.S., Geneva

JAPAN

Lutheran Merger Predicted for 1959

Dr. Chiose Kishi, president of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, predicts that the major Lutheran bodies in Japan will be united by 1959.

The new church, he says, will bring together the 8,388-member JEIC and churches which have come into existence since World War II through mission programmes of various Norwegian and U.S. groups. These have a combined membership of about 2,500 persons.

Related to the JEIC are missions of the United and Augustana Lutheran churches. Other missions involved in the negotiations include those supported by the Suomi Synod, Lutheran Free and Evangelical Lutheran churches. Three other missions - those supported by the Lutheran Missouri Synod, Lutheran Brethren and a Norwegian society - have withdrawn from the negotiating committee.
E.P.S., Geneva

INDIAThree Indians to Become Bishops

The Metropolitan of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon has announced the appointment of three Indian bishops to the Anglican sees of Chota Nagpur, Nasik and Nagpur.

One of the new bishops, the Rev. S.A.B. Dilbar Hans, is the first aboriginal to be elected to the episcopate. His diocese of Chota Nagpur is almost entirely tribal.

The other new bishops are Canon Arthur Luther, principal of Bishop Cotton School, Nagpur, who will be the first Indian bishop of the see of Nasik, and the Rev. John Sadiq, secretary of the National Christian Council of India, who will become bishop of Nagpur. The three bishops will be consecrated on September 15.

E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATESChurch Membership at Record Level

(New York) - Church membership in the United States reached an "all-time high" of 103,224,954 in 1956, according to statistics just released by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

The 1956 total is a gain of slightly more than 3 million persons over 1955 and means that 62 out of every 100 Americans are members of a church or synagogue. A hundred years ago only 20 out of every 100 persons were church members.

Of the grand total with religious affiliations, 60,148,980 are Protestants, 34,563,851 Roman Catholics, 5,500,000 Jews, 2,598,055 Eastern Orthodox, 367,370 Old Catholics and Polish National Catholics, 63,000 Buddhists and 20,000 Moslems.

The statistics are from the Yearbook of American Churches for 1958 which is published by the NCCC. The figures are based on official reports provided by 258 of the 268 religious bodies listed in the Yearbook. According to the Yearbook, the major religious bodies have developed in about the same relationship to each other during the last 50 years. Thirty years ago, 27 per cent of the population was Protestant; today the figure is 35.9. Roman Catholics were 16 per cent of the population a generation ago - today they represent 20.7 per cent.

The largest Protestant church body is the Methodist Church, with 9,400,000 members and nearly 40,000 local churches. Second is the Southern Baptist Convention with 8,700,000 members, and third is the National Baptist Convention with 4,550,000.

Enrolment in Sunday schools is also at a new high level. Nearly 37,000,000 Americans are enrolled in classes being led by 3,000,000 teachers.

A new record number of 235,100 clergymen are in charge of 306,647 places of worship. Church construction continues to set records each year. Last year a record \$775,000,000 was spent, \$40,000,000 more than the year before, and predictions are that more than \$800,000,000 will be spent next year on new church buildings.

E.P.S., Geneva

News about the Bible

The Swiss Bible Society, in an effort to make the Bible available to all through the spoken word, is giving away inexpensive record players. The machines, which operate by a crank handle, are being produced at low cost and distributed in Pakistan, Liberia and Mexico.

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The newspaper kiosks at the Stockholm Central Railway Station are now also selling Bibles. The Association of Christian Commercial Travellers, which has already distributed Bibles in hotels, has pioneered sales at the railway station.

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The Bible Society of India and Ceylon is planning to publish entire Gospels in serial form in various newspapers, both in regional languages and in English.

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The first translation of the New Testament into Maya has been completed after three years' revision work on the first draft. The language is spoken by about 300,000 people in Yucatan and neighbouring areas of Mexico.

E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

Dr. Irvin Underhill, a prominent Negro clergyman and civic leader of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has accepted a pastorate offered by an all-white Presbyterian church near Rochester, New York. The appointment, effective on September 1, sets a precedent in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

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A bill permitting women to be ordained as pastors in the State Lutheran Church has been presented to the Legislative Council of the Swedish Parliament. A recent report shows that there are 160 women candidates of theology in Sweden.

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An international committee of laymen to support the Protestant pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Exhibition and to help in planning its programme and exhibits has been formed in Washington, D.C. The committee's acting secretary is Miss Ella Harllee, a staff member of the Washington Federation of Churches and United Church Women. The pavilion is being sponsored by the Belgian Protestant Federation.

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The United Church of Japan, which recently voted to send two young ministers to Canada, has now agreed to send a Japanese pastor to South America at the request of a Japanese church in Brazil. Japanese pastors have also been requested in the Philippines.

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Evangelist Billy Graham's New York Crusade, originally scheduled to close on August 10 after two extensions, was continued until September 1. The crusade, which opened on May 15, was the longest campaign Dr. Graham has conducted and ended with a rally in Times Square, New York. Billy Graham is planning to make an evangelistic tour of seven countries in the Caribbean area early in 1958. It will be his first visit to Central America.

* *

The Methodist Student Movement has withdrawn from merger negotiations with student organisations of four other U.S. Protestant denominations. Still taking part in the negotiations to form the United Campus Christian Fellowship are student groups of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Disciples of Christ, United Church of Christ and Evangelical United Brethren. The Methodist students said they were not "prepared at this time to merge our heritage into an organisational structure without a dialogue concerning the heritage". Instead, they voted for the MSM to hold union discussions within the Ecumenical Advisory Commission of the United Student Christian Council, the youth arm of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

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Organised labour in the United States has been urged to help solve the moral dilemmas arising out of the nation's current booming economy. In its annual Labour Sunday message (September 1), the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. said America's economy of abundance presents a situation "full of peril". The message said "new and heavy demands are placed on the Christian conscience to seek Christian perspective on the distribution and use of increasing material abundance and a true sense of stewardship of its mounting benefits".

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An honorary doctor of theology degree was conferred by the University of Erlangen, Germany, upon Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, executive secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, during the Federation's third Assembly in Minneapolis, Minnesota, last month. The degree was in recognition of his "extraordinary service" to the Lutheran churches of the world.

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Ninety people attended the annual international Congress of the Christian Movement for Peace at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, near Geneva, from August 16 to 23. Discussions centred around conflicts between Eastern and Western civilisation and between Christianity and Eastern religions, especially Islam. The meeting studied non-violent ways of surmounting the social, economic and political problems arising.

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President Ernst Wilm of the Evangelical Church in Westphalia, Superintendent Günther Jacob of Cottbus (DDR), Dr. Hans Thimme of Soest and Dr. Heinz Kloppenburg of Dortmund will visit Protestant churches in Tzechoslovakia in November, following postponement of their proposed visit last December. E.P.S., Geneva

